United Nations S/PRST/2001/21

Security Council

Distr.: General
31 August 2001
English
Original: English and Spanish

Statement by the President of the Security Council

At the 4362nd meeting of the Security Council, held on 31 August 2001, in continuation of its consideration of the item entitled "Small arms" at its 4335th meeting on 2 August 2001, the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council reaffirms the statement of its President of 24 September 1999 (S/PRST/1999/28) and its Resolution 1209 (1998) of 19 November 1998, and notes with grave concern that the destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons in many regions of the world increases the intensity and duration of armed conflicts, undermines the sustainability of peace agreements, impedes the success of peace-building, frustrates efforts aimed at the prevention of armed conflict, hinders considerably the provision of humanitarian assistance, and compromises the effectiveness of the Security Council in discharging its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council expressed grave concern at the harmful impact of small arms and light weapons on civilians in situations of armed conflict, particularly on vulnerable groups such as women and children and recalls in this regard its resolutions 1296 (2000) of 19 April 2000 and 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000.

"The Security Council further notes with satisfaction the growing awareness within the international community of the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons as a challenge that involves security, humanitarian and development dimensions. In this regard the Council welcomes recent global and regional initiatives such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); the Resolution on Small Arms of the Council of Ministers of the European Union; the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons; and the extension of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Moratorium on the Production and Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

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"The Security Council welcomes the adoption of the Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference in the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, and calls on all Member States to take the required measures to promptly implement the recommendations contained therein. The Council recognizes its responsibility in assisting in the implementation of this Programme of Action, and stresses that the success of this Programme depends on the political will and efforts of Member States to implement its measures at the national, regional and global levels, as well as on the provision of international cooperation and assistance and on the follow-up agreed by the Conference, including the convening of a Review Conference no later than 2006.

"The Security Council reaffirms the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and, subject to the Charter, the right of each State to import, produce and retain small arms and light weapons for its self-defence and security needs. Bearing in mind the considerable volume of licit trade in small arms and light weapons, the Council underlines the vital importance of effective national regulations and controls for this trade. In this regard, arms-exporting countries should exercise the highest degree of responsibility in small arms and light weapons transactions, and all countries have the responsibility to prevent their illegal diversion and re-export, so as to stem the leakage of legal weapons to illegal markets. The Security Council also stresses the importance of international cooperation to enable States to identify and trace in a timely and reliable manner illicit small arms and light weapons.

"The Security Council underlines the importance of practical disarmament measures in averting armed conflicts and encourages States and relevant international and regional organizations to facilitate the appropriate cooperation of civil society actors in activities related to the prevention and combating of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, including facilitating greater awareness and better understanding of the nature and scope of this problem.

"The Security Council recognizes the important role of regional and subregional organizations in providing useful information and perspectives on the regional and subregional dimensions that characterize arms flows to conflicts, and underscores the importance of regional agreements and cooperation in this regard.

"The Security Council emphasizes the importance of the effective collection and control of small arms and light weapons, and of their storage and destruction, as appropriate, in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes, as well as other measures that may contribute to the effective disposal of small arms and light weapons, and to prevention of the spread of these weapons to other regions. To this end, the Council welcomes the publication by the Secretary-General of the Handbook on Environmentally Sound Methods of Destruction of Small Arms, Light Weapons, Ammunition and Explosives. The Council stresses the importance of incorporating, on a case by case basis, in the negotiation, consolidation and implementation of peace agreements, as well as in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations, appropriate provisions for the disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, taking into account the special needs of child soldiers.

"The Security Council reiterates its call for the effective implementation of arms embargoes imposed by the Council in its relevant resolutions, and encourages Member States to provide the Sanctions Committees with available information on alleged violations of arms embargoes. The Security Council expresses its determination to continue to improve the efficiency of the arms embargoes imposed by the Council on a case by case basis, including through the establishment of specific monitoring mechanisms or similar arrangements as appropriate. The Council stresses the need to engage the relevant international organizations, non-governmental organizations, business and financial institutions and other actors at the international, regional and local levels to contribute to the implementation of arms embargoes.

"The Security Council stresses the need for cooperation and sharing of information among the Member States, and among the different Sanctions Committees on arms traffickers that have violated arms embargoes established by the Council. This information could also be provided to Interpol's International Weapons and Explosives Tracking System (IWETS) database or any other relevant database that may be developed for this purpose.

"The Security Council stresses the need for innovative strategies to address the relationship between the illicit exploitation of natural and other resources and the purchase and trade in illegal weapons in those situations under its consideration. The Council expresses its intention to continue to consider employing effective measures to prevent the illicit exploitation of natural and other resources from fuelling those conflicts. In this regard, information on financial or other transactions fuelling the illicit flow of arms to those conflicts should be made available to the Council.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to include in his reports regarding relevant situations under consideration in the Council, analytical assessments on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons including, to the extent possible and within available resources, availability, stockpiling, lines of supply, brokering, transportation arrangements and financial networks for these weapons, as well as their humanitarian impact, especially on children.

"The Security Council recognizes the role of the Secretary-General in supporting the coordination of all United Nations activities to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In this connection, the Security Council requests the Secretary-General to submit a report of the Council by September 2002 containing specific recommendations on ways and means in which the Council may contribute to deal with the question of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in situations under its consideration, taking into account the views of Member States, recent experiences in the field and the contents of this Statement."